

Message Text

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65-61

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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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USIAC

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SUBJ: MUSICAL-CHAIRS CONTINUE AT MININFO

1. ON MONDAY, MAY 26, THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED "KEY" CHANGES IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.
2. THESE INCLUDED THE NAMING OF A NEW MINISTER OF INFORMATION, MAJOR YACOB GEBRE-EGZIABHER; HEAD OF THE PRESS DEPT, GEDAMU ABRAHA; HEAD OF THE ETHIOPIAN NEWS AGENCY, BAALU GIRMA; HEAD OF INFORMATION FOR THE ETHIOPIAN NEWS AGENCY, KEFELE MAMMO; HEAD OF THE RADIO DEPT, AZARIA KIROS; HEAD OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPT, IYASSU BAEDE-MARIAM.
3. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND THE HEAD OF THE RADIO DEPT, ALL THE OTHER APPOINTMENTS INVOLVE WELL-KNOWN AND WELL-WORN MEDIA TYPES. WE CONSIDER THESE LATEST CHANGES TO BE ANOTHER ROUND OF MUSICAL CHAIRS.

MAJOR YACOB GEBRE-EGHZIABHER - ACCORDING TO INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE, HAS BEEN IN YUGOSLAVIA FOR THE PAST 9-10 YEARS. HE IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A POLICE OFFICER. HE OBTAINED JOURNALISM DEGREE IN YUGOSLAVIA AND

WAS COMPLETING HIS STUDIES FOR PHD IN INTERNATIONAL LAW WHEN HE WAS CALLED BACK TO ADDIS ABOUT FOUR MONTHS AGO. PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR YUGOSLAVIA, HE WAS EDITOR OF THE WEEKLY AMHARIC POLICE MAGAZINE. MAJ YACOB IS A MEMBER OF USIS LIBRARY AND WE HEAR THAT HE ALSO USED USIS FACILITIES IN BELGRADE. HE IS SUPPOSED TO BE OPEN AND WILLING TO LISTEN AND DISCUSS PROBLEMS. HIS APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER OF INFORMATION CAME AS SOMEWHAT OF A SURPRISE SINCE HE MUCH PREFERRED AN APPOINTMENT IN MOFA IN KEEPING WITH HIS GRADUATE STUDIES.

TESFAYE TADESSE - NO BIODATA AVAILABLE. WILL PROVIDE ASAP.

AZARIA KIROS - YOUTHFUL, WAS FORMER EDITOR OF MONTHLY AMHARIC MAGAZINE (NOW DEFUNCT) WHICH WAS PRODUCED BY LOCAL PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM. HE ALSO WORKED FOR ETHIOPIAN TELEVISION AS A NEWSCASTER PRIOR TO JOINING PR FIRM.

GEDAMU ABRAHA - PREVIOUSLY HEAD OF TELEVISION DEPT. WAS ALSO FORMER ADVISOR AT ETV AND HAD PRIOR NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE EXPERIENCE.

BAALU GIRMA - WAS A FORMER EDITOR OF AMHARIC LANGUAGE DAILY ADDIS ZEMEN. HE LOST HIS JOB SEVERAL MONTHS AGO BECAUSE, WE HEAR, HE WAS NOT ADVOCATING ETHIOPIAN SOCIALISM HARD ENOUGH. SPENT ABOUT TWO MONTHS IN LIMBO STATUS BEFORE BEING ASSIGNED AS ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER OF THE ETHIOPIAN NEWS AGENCY. HE HAS APPARENTLY REGAINED FAVOR OF PMAC.

KEFELE MAMMO - RECENTLY OBTAINED MASTER'S DEGREE IN JOURNALISM IN THE US UNDER USIS AUSPICES. PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS EDITOR OF AMHARIC NEWS AT ETHIOPIAN NEWS AGENCY.

IYASSU BAEDE-MARIAM - WAS HEAD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR THE AWASH VALLEY AUTHORITY. HE WAS ALSO FORMER REPORTER FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY ETHIOPIAN HERALD. IYASSU STUDIED IN SOVIET UNION AND IS MARRIED TO RUSSIAN.

COMMENT: SINCE NEW MINISTER OF INFORMATION IS UNKNOWN QUANTITY, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS POINT TO DETERMINE WHAT EFFECT LATEST RESHUFFLE WILL HAVE ON MEDIA POLICY, WHICH UNDER THE PROVISIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CONSPICUOUS BY ITS ABSENCE. SINCE THE DEMISE OF THE EMPEROR, THE MEDIA HAS BEEN FLOUNDERING IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, REFLECTING IN MANY CASES THE CONFUSION THAT PREVAILS AT THE DECISION-MAKING LEVEL IN THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS MININFO SOURCES, THE CIVILIANS IN THE MEDIA ARE BACKSTOPPED BY THE MILITARY, BUT HAVE RECEIVED NO POLICY GUIDANCE FROM THEM. THIS MAY CHANGE NOW THAT THE HEAD OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION IS A MILITARY MAN

WHO SHOULD, THEORETICALLY AT LEAST, HAVE BETTER RAPPORT WITH THE
PMAC. LACK OF CLEAR-CUT DIRECTION HAS CONFUSED AND DEMORALIZED
MEDIA PERSONNEL AT ALL LEVELS AND IT IS GOING TO TAKE A STRONG HAND
TO TURN THINGS AROUND AND INJECT NEW VIGOR INTO THIS MINISTRY.

DECON MAY 28, 1976.
LEWIS

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